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ABSTRACT

The works of French literary theorists Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes reflect a view of the text as the primary object of investigation for any discipline in the human sciences. Each of the three has been involved with pedagogical reforms within French cultural institutions: Derrida with the teaching of philosophy, Lacan with psychoanalytical training, and Barthes with literature teaching. In Barthes' view, reading should not be constrained by literary convention or equated with the consumption of writing, and writing should not be confined to professional writers, teachers, and intellectuals. Lacan applied Freudian principles to communication, and introduced the notion of the text as a chain of signifiers. The "true" meaning of a text, Lacan believed, was to be found in gaps in the text, which interpretation would fill. To Derrida, there is no non-metaphorical standpoint from which to perceive the order and the demarcation of the metaphorical field. Derrida's deconstruction explodes the opposition of the metaphoric and the proper in a text, so that reading requires a double reading of the text. Barthes concluded that reading could still be taught in the schools, if the function of the institutional codes was clearly identified and the accomplishments of liberal secular schooling was maintained but directed toward deciphering codes. (Forty references are attached.) (SG)

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Literary Theory and the Notion of Difficulty

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Introduction: The Theory of the Text

My charge in this paper is to review the implications of current literary theory and theoretical views of the text for determining the nature of text difficulty and reading proficiency. This in itself is a topic of some difficulty. Modern literary theory is a large and often arcane area; no one, I think, could claim competence in all of its diverse idioms, or even an easy familiarity with them. Indeed, as often as not, theorists today are apt to write on the sublime difficulties of mastering just one critical idiom in all of its current ramifications. (See Hertz, 1985. All of the essays in this series reflect the difficulty of mastering textuality with a metalanguage.) Nor can the "key words" approach do us much good in this situation, for as I. A. Richards observed, a certain familiarity with critical key words may breed contempt for the literary text and thereby block us from truly understanding it. And as a matter of fact, the theory of the text is for this very reason critical of any metalanguage - of any institutional mediator of meaning - a factor which makes it all the more difficult to present in a summary fashion. Nonetheless, I will attempt to discuss within a reasonably short space three theorists whose idioms have a certain currency in the Anglo-American academic community, or at least that part of it which concerns itself with theorizing on the process of reading literary texts.

I mean specifically the writings of French literary theorists and thinkers such as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes, who share a view that the text is the primary object of investigation and point of departure for any discipline in the human sciences, whether it be psychoanalysis (Lacan), philosophy (Derrida), or literary criticism and theory (Barthes). Where there is no text, there is no object of study, and no object of thought either. All three thinkers would agree with this statement, though they may present different views about the nature of textuality, and the difficulty of apprehending it, as they see it from their disciplines. I will discuss the problem of the text as each thinker defines it in the appropriate section below, but "text," at this early point of our investigation, is to be understood in the broadest sense as any coherent complex of signs.

How textuality has been explored by these three thinkers is my main theoretical concern in this paper, but I might mention at the outset that each of these thinkers has been involved with pedagogical reforms within institutions in French culture: Derrida with the teaching of philosophy, Lacan with a training institute in psychoanalysis and a famous seminar, and Barthes with the teaching of literature. Each has had provocative and sometimes discouraging things to say about the difficulties of apprehending textuality in an institutional context (Barthes went so far as to say that the theory of the text has little institutional future). They have made pronouncements of this sort because the theory of the text tends to abolish the separation of genres and arts on which the traditional university has been founded. For the theory of the text no longer considers works as mere "messages" transmitted from one generation to the next, or even as "statements," that is, finished products whose destiny would be sealed as soon as they were uttered, but as "perpetual productions," enunciations through which a semiotically conceived subject continues to struggle (cf. Kristeva, 1980).

The central theme of this semiotic subject involved with textuality as we find it in

Barthes, Derrida, and Lacan is that self-knowledge comes not from introspection, from an inquiry into a putative "inner world" of autonomous consciousness and sense-constituting acts (key themes in Husserlian phenomenology and criticism of consciousness as practiced by George Poulet and others of the Geneva School), but from reflection upon the field of expressions in which one finds oneself, individually and socially. (For an account of the Geneva School, see Lawall, 1968.) This subject is no doubt that of the author, but it is also that of the reader, and the theory of the text also tends to abolish the institutional barriers set between the two. In other words, the theory of the text brings with it a new epistemological object: reading, an object virtually disdained by the whole of French classical criticism and the American New Criticism as well, which never had any but the most meager conception of the reader whose relation to the work was thought to be one of projection.

For French critics such as Roland Barthes, a literary text is one species of the social institution called *écriture* (writing); what makes it literary is the fact that the writing embodies a set of specifically literary conventions and codes. But while Barthes agrees that it is important to know these codes, the activity of *lecture* (reading) as he conceives it should not allow itself to be entirely constrained by the literary conventions and codes that went into the writing. On the contrary, the theory of the text authorizes us to read works of the past with an entirely modern gaze and insists strongly on the productive equivalence of reading and writing. Furthermore, reading is not to be conceived of as a mere act of consumption. Full reading for Barthes would involve *plaisir/jouissance* in which the reader is nothing less than the one who desires to write, to give him/herself up to an erotic practice of language (see discussion of pleasure in reading below).

In other words the theory of the text suggests that the idea of difficulty is less a property of texts themselves than of the ways in which institutions train us to read:

> The theory of the text can find historical indications in the use of reading; it is certain that contemporary civilization tends to flatten reading out, by making it into a simple consumption, entirely separated from writing. Not only does the school system boast that it teaches reading, and no longer as in former times writing (even if the pupil or student of those days had to write according to a highly conventionalized rhetorical code), but also writing itself is driven off and confined in a caste of technicians (writers, teachers, intellectuals). (Barthes, 1981, p. 42)

Of course institutions (or communities, cf. Purves, 1990) and the ways in which they train us to read is a subject of much critical debate in the United States recently. To give one example, I need only mention Robert Scholes's Textual Power (1985), which is an analysis of the entire English apparatus and how it could be reformed to overcome the split between composition and literature by using textual theory. Scholes is somewhat more hopeful than Barthes about the possibilities of institutional reform, but it is not my purpose here to assess these various projects or their feasibility (another is Gregory L. Ulmer's Allied Grammatology, 1985, using Derridean theory of the text). I will be discussing only the theory of the text as we find it in the works of Lacan, Derrida, and Barthes and not the American appropriation of these works.

It is worth mentioning, however, that to the extent that Barthes was a reformist, he was inclined by personal temperament to a provisional, localized kind of reformism. For him, teaching would be directed towards "exploding" the literary text, tracing its codes and semantic fissures, examining the multiple ways in which any one literary text echoes, or is inescapably

linked to, other texts, whether by open or covert citations and allusions, by the assimilation of features of an earlier text by a later text, or simply by participation in a common stock of literary codes and conventions. The teaching of literature would then be directed towards having students acquire a sensitivity to intertextuality, a term used by Julia Kristeva but which ultimately stems from the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin (see "The Problem of the Text" in Bakhtin, 1986.) I might add that to a thorough-going poststructuralist such as Barthes, the world itself can be "textualized":

> The pedagogical problem would be to shake up the literary notion of the text and to make adolescents understand that there is text everywhere, but that not everything is text; I mean that there is text everywhere, but that repetition, stereotype and *doxa* are also everywhere. That's the goal: the distinction between this textuality, which is not to be found only in literature, and society's neurotic, repetitive activity. (Barthes, 1985, p. 149)

Barthes's remarks that repetition, stereotype, and *doxa* (opinion, popular belief) are everywhere, and that students should be trained to see the difference between this and textuality per se will be discussed later, but presently I want to point out that these remarks have an affinity of thought with those of I. A. Richards and his notion of the stock response, i.e., fixed conventionalized reactions. Richards was the first Anglo-American literary critic to be largely concerned with the notion of difficulty in reading, and although his Practical Criticism (1929, though my references are to a 1963 edition) was written over a half-century ago, it still has relevance today. His peculiar mixture of Arnoldian high seriousness and positivism may seem old-fashioned, but that does not mean that we cannot learn from his methods - or from his hopes. Indeed, as we look back today with revisionary eyes at the intellectual figures who shaped cultural criticism in the twentieth century, Richards seems a prime target for rereading.

Something of this rereading is present in Geoffrey Hartman's The Fate of Reading (1975) in which Richards is a key intellectual figure leading to what Hartman calls our "dream of communication" - of total, controllable communication. Hartman points out that Richards was the first to diagnose how the modern heterogeneous growth of society - it includes the rise of other media - has "disordered" our ability to read. Richards's empirical studies of his students at Cambridge University, as they expressed themselves in protocols of reading, revealed the shocking and disturbing fact that many of them simply could not understand the "textuality" (Richards did not use this word, but I think that the notion is clearly operative in his comments) of poetry. They had difficulties on every level, from failure to make out the plain sense of a poem, to general critical preconceptions and prior demands made upon poetry as a result of theories, conscious or unconscious, about its nature and value. Although Richards was disturbed by his findings, he did not believe that readers needed to be as helpless as his protocols showed them to be. On the contrary, the reader "ought to be given better defensive technique against the manifold bamboozlements of the world" (Richards, 1963, p. 74). The effect of Practical Criticism (which Richards called "fieldwork in comparative ideology") was to demonstrate that reading could not be taken as second nature any longer. In later books he tried to consider reading on a serious philosophical level. In these books Richards was the first critic to insist that in an age which, partly through social causes, was rapidly losing its ability to read with understanding, reflective inquiry into the reading of texts was necessary. He hoped that this reflective inquiry might lead to a theory by which the powers of reading might he regained "this time as a less vulnerable and more deeply grounded, because more consciously

recognized, endowment" (Richards, 1935, p. 195).

But Hartman does not discuss the ways in which Richards's goals have themselves become institutionalized. That story is told in Elizabeth Freund's The Return of the Reader (1987), in which Richards also wins a place of respect and is seen as a constituting father figure who "is responsible, no matter how indirectly, for the way we read" (p. 38). In Freund's revisionary history, Richards begets the enemy brothers of reader-response criticism and "objective" formalist criticism at once. According to her, it was Richards's authentic respect for semantic instability and for the prodigality of verbal meaning, joined with his belief in the perfectibility of communication, that bred his aspiration to analyze, institutionalize and thereby curb a seemingly uncontrollable proliferation of idiosyncratic readings, to "regulate" meaning (p. 43). Freund goes on to show how Richards dealt with semantic plurality by proposing a four-part theory of meaning. We cannot grasp any utterance fully, Richards argues, unless we understand at least four different kinds of meaning (which he called sense, feeling, tone, and intention) and their interdependence upon one another. In ways similar to Barthes, the Richards of the Practical Criticism focuses our attention on the differences and ambiguities of the literary text (a project carried out by his student Empson). But of course he wants to regulate meaning in ways that Barthes, with his view of "exploding" the text, does not. Freund's retrospective account of Richards takes a much more skeptical view of him than Hartman does - "We do not solve problems by means of theory; only sort their components out differently" (p. 39) - but still admits that the Practical Criticism is a theoretical book of distinction.

In view of the importance of Richards to the Anglo-American tradition, I have used his categories of the difficulties involved in criticism - in a form modified and generalized by Purves and Beach in their Literature and the Reader (1972) - as a familiar point of reference throughout what follows. Purves and Beach found that the classification of problems in reading and understanding overlap a great deal and could be generalized into three schemata of understanding: information lack; cognitive failure; and psychological block. In this paper I have dealt primarily with the second two schemata.

Jacques Lacan and the Text of Freud

Freud's influence on his time does not necessarily reflect a close reading of his texts: his ideas were popularized, his jargon came into common usage (consider his influence on the modern literature of the fantastic, for example). But very often knowledge of his theories was second hand, by way of critics or magazines. In lectures, essays, and seminars for over thirty years until the time of his death in 1981, Lacan had been urging a return to the letter of Freud's text. With Socratic irony ("I know that I don't know") and the sovereign liberty with language taken by Humpty Dumpty, he railed against what he took to be the stultification of Freud's text at the hands of post-Freudian analysts (especially in the area of ego psychology). This activity earned him an excommunication from the International Psychoanalytic Association by 1963. But he went on to found his own school where he never let people forget that Freud's discovery was the unconscious as a field of linguistic and scientific (and thereby materialist) investigation. As a matter of fact, Lacan claimed to be reading the unconscious of Freud's text - what Freud unconsciously was led to repress in his own writings. (For an account of the Freudian school of Paris [*Ecole Freudienne de Paris*] and the schisms within the French psychoanalytic movement, see Turkle, 1978.)

This view that a text might have an unconscious, a silent area that could be brought to light by textual analysis, became a model for certain Marxist critics interested in how ideology works in a text, notably Louis Althusser and, to a lesser extent, Fredric Jameson (1976). (See, for example, Althusser & Balibar, 1970, which states that "Only a symptomatic reading (*lecture symptomale*) constructing the problematic, the unconscious of the text, is a reading of Marx's work that will allow us to establish the epistomological break that makes possible historical materialism as a science," p. 317.) As the Marxists were quick to see, the theory of textuality, whatever fundamental objections may be made to it, has at least the advantage as a strategy of obliging the reader to give an account of his/her object of study qua text. The reader is thus no longer tempted to view it as some kind of empirically existing reality in its own right (Richards's insistence on finding the "treads" of a poem's texture that guide our response is a rough equivalent to this). Likewise in his own copious theoretical writings, the Ecrits (1977a), Lacan goes directly to the site of the unconscious kept to by Freud: the discourse of the subject reported to the analyst during the analytic session.

Lacan devotes much of his attention to Freud's many remarks on the irruptive nature of the unconscious as it manifests itself in language jokes, slips of the tongue, and dreams, all of which can be said to go against the conscious intentions of the ego. To quote two well-known aphorisms from this book: Lacan insists that the Freudian unconscious is "structured as a language," and that in this unconscious "man's desire is the desire of the Other," the Other being defined as the locus from which language, the bearer of symbolic social codes, operates. In order to express our desires we must of necessity enter into the alienating realm of the symbolic. Both phrases are intended to remind us that the unconscious can only be understood through the symbolic functions of the word, and through the analysis of texts, whether in the form of a dream report (which is not, I hasten to add, the dream itself as an experience of the imaginary) or other linguistic documents.

In his Ecrits, Lacan demonstrated also his verve in using literature (the Ecrits opens with the famous seminar on Poe's short story, "The Purloined Letter," which at the very least is ramifying allegory of the analytic process). But in his seminars in particular, Lacan's aim seems to have been to effect a kind of analytic listening. By means of a brilliant and often hermetic literary style (called "paranoid" by even his most ardent admirers) replete with puns, literary allusions, and syntactic aporias, Lacan exposed his audience and himself to the radical decentering effects (to what Freud called "His Majesty The Ego") of the unconscious field. Many intellectuals have written accounts of what it was like to attend one of these seminars, especially women intellectuals who sensed that Lacan had something important to say to them (in fact, some claim that his thinking is based entirely on the study of female paranoia). Catherine Clement, a former pupil and disciple of Lacan who regularly attended the seminar in Paris, claims that Lacan used the most powerful elements of the paranoid style - the incommunicable strangeness of the delirious text - with calculated effect:

> I say again, with calculated effect. For invariably, along with the hermetic phrases, he slipped in a limpid sentence or two. Just when the meaning seemed most obscure there would glimmer a flash of logic that made it possible to put all of the pieces together. Still, he took from his familiarity with paranoid inspiration his knowledge of a dangerous and subtle game; he walked the fine line between communication and noncommunication, between light and darkness: the *midire*, or mid-speak, the art of the half-spoken thought. (Clement, 1983, p. 59)

Thus while explicating Freud, whose most paranoid statement was perhaps that the ego is not master in its own house, Lacan operated with a dialectic of language that was both open and closed. Lacan tried to simulate the language of the delirious subject which is closed and deliberately selective. But in trying to do so he thereby put his audience in the position of a psychoanalyst who must listen in silence but finally "open" or interpret a text. He believed that this kind of speech - or the transcript of his seminars - would reveal more of the nature of the unconscious field in culture than any straightforward presentation in logical discourse of Freud's metapsychology (remember that I mentioned at the outset of this paper that the theory of the text is suspicious of any metalanguage).

Judging from the reception of Freud's dream-theory alone, we would have to say that Lacan's approach to the "truth" of Freud's text, if somewhat circuitous, has justification. Freud, whose own style was the lucid antithesis of Lacan's, complained in his New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1965) that despite all his efforts to clarify the theory of dreams, scientists, literary men, and the public at large still did not comprehend his discovery. Ironically, Freud said, he was in a position to claim this because in the thirty years since the publication of The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) he had received "innumerable letters" from those who claimed to have read his book, letters asking for information about the nature of dreams and presenting him with dreams for interpretation, letters which betrayed their lack of understanding in every sentence. In others words, Freud realized belatedly that the problem in communicating his theory of the dream was that his method of dealing with the text of a dream was indeed a curious affair, "not the usual way of dealing with a communication or utterance" (Freud, 1965, p. 7-8).

From the character of Freud's remarks it is reasonable to assert that he was dealing with a difficulty in reading that Richards called the stock response (though there certainly may have been others, such as difficulties with imagery, and mnemonic irrelevancies). Stock responses have their opportunity, according to Richards, whenever a text involves views and emotions already fully prepared in the reader's mind; we are blocked from a full response to the text (Richards, 1963, p. 223-40). Especially revealing are those responses which included dreams for Freud to interpret, as if there were some symbolic code or "master key" which Freud knew would unlock the secrets of dream images as in traditional books of dream interpretation and mysticism. The irony of the situation was that Freud claimed that his dream-theory ("what is most characteristic and peculiar about the young science") had uncovered a stretch of new country which had been reclaimed from popular beliefs and mysticism, but despite all his efforts his readers - scientists, literary men, and the public at large - still did not comprehend his discovery. What they were missing, I would say, is the experience of textuality. For Freud's interpretive strategy with the dream was a textual process built largely upon the patient's personal associations and not upon any symbology (unlike Jung's theory of the dream).

Freud was writing at almost the same time as Richards, and like Richards, he still had faith in the dream of communication (if not the communication of the dream). Lacan, on the other hand, sees the difficulties of communicating Freud's interpretation of dreams as much more problematic, as not simply a matter of removing certain technical faults in the communication process. There is no room here for anything like an adequate account of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Analyzing a brief passage from one of Lacan's seminars dealing with the theory of dreams might, however, give us some insight into a problem that Richards thought was at the root of a lot of misreading: the problem of narcissism, a "very frequent cause of erratic reading" (Richards, 1963, p. 237).

In a seminar given in February of 1964, Lacan discussed the role of imagery in the dream, weaving a text that was full of puns and enigmatic allusions to the works of Freud and those of an ancient Chinese mystic, Chuang-tsu. Like Freud, he was anxious to distinguish the Freudian "scientific" view of the dream from that of the mystic about whom he is at times very ironic. Nonetheless, he seems to have drawn his poetic inspiration from the visionary qualities of Chuang-tsu's butterfly dream and comes off himself as something of a shaman guiding us through a dream experience. I will come to this passage in a moment, but first a brief account of the origins of narcissism according to Lacan is necessary.

That the ego has a capacity to fail to recognize (*méconnaissance*) was the very foundation of his technique of analysis. In his famous essay "The Mirror Stage," Lacan argued that the image in the mirror seen at any early stage of development by the child becomes the prototype for all later images of the self. This represents for the child, for the first time, the image of itself as a unified, controllable body that is visible to others. The child greets this image with an expression of jubilation. The mirror stage is, however, no cause for jubilation, for the child fatally takes this specular image to be real, his/her real self. It is an unconscious, alienated image that will govern the child's relations with other children in the dialectics of intersubjectivity and it begins also a kind of internal rivalry in the child. So, subjects become aware of their desire in the other, through the intermediary of the image of the other which offers them the semblance of their own mastery.

It is this notion of a specular ego, which is particularly visible in dreams, that perception generates. In one way or another, Freud said, every image in the dream is about the person dreaming. Lacan modifies this by saying that it is not the sleeper but the other to whom the dream is addressed. Or, a bit more precisely, the images of the dream presuppose an unconscious Other to whom they are addressed and to whom they display themselves. That is why, in his punning phrase, *ça montre*, "it [the Freudian id, *le ça*] shows." The dreamer's narcissistic desire is therefore the desire of the Other, for he sees himself as an object, an ego, in the eyes of the Other. In a dream we may also have the uneasy experience of *le regard* (the gaze) - objects may appear to be looking at us, displaying themselves for us. The experience can only be one of a trap, a lure, which Lacan says in a provocative phrase, "situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction" (Lacan, 1977a, p. 2).

Enough has now been said for us to examine a segment of Lacan's style from the seminar. Throughout the passage, Lacan is trying to evoke the exchange that takes place between the subject's image and the image of the other in the dream:

> When Chuang-tsu wakes up, he may ask himself whether it is not the butterfly who dreams that he is Chuang-tsu. Indeed he is right, and doubly so, first because it proves he is not mad, he does not regard himself as absolutely identical with Chuang-tsu and, secondly, because he does not fully understand how right he is. In fact it is when he was the butterfly [i.e. when he was dreaming] that he apprehended one of the roots of his identity - that he was, and is, in his essence (*dans son essence*) that butterfly who paints himself with his own colors - and it is because of this that, in the last resort, he is Chuang-tsu. (Lacan, 1977b, p. 76)

If one of the fundamental techniques of ambiguity is to give a single word opposite and contradictory meanings (as Empson (1930/1978) so ably demonstrated), one of which is known

only to those who are in the know, then Lacan surely is carrying on with his "mid-speak," his paranoid style, in this passage which is both open and closed: closed to those who have not read his theories on the mirror stage, and open to the ears of the chosen few, his disciples and friends, who have come to hear the persecuted prophet deliver his message. He seems to be saying to them that it is at the heart of the mirage of the dream that we have to search, in the person who plays the leading role, for the sleeper's own person *à ses propres couleurs*, in his own colors (Lacan is hinting at the intensification of color in the dream, part of the dream's attempt to mislead us). For those in the know, the significance of Chuang-tsu's butterfly dream for Lacan is revealed in his use of the word "essence." Lacan is serious when he says that the essence of the gaze, the essence of man's desire, is summed up by Chuang-tsu's butterfly dream. (The text of Chuang-tsu's butterfly dream is given in The Complete Works of Chuang-tsu, 1970.) Yet this is because Chuang-tsu, the famous Chinese seer capable of reflecting on his own dream experience (or rather, on the difference between waking and dreaming), "does not know how right he is" when he doubts that he is absolutely identical with Chuang-tsu (essence implies self-identity).

Lacan goes on to add that Chuang-tsu is, when awake, a captive butterfly caught in the butterfly net of others (meaning their language, their name for him, his position in the social order) because he must fashion a report of his dream by writing a text and representing himself as a butterfly. But when he is dreaming, he is a butterfly for nobody, Lacan says, captured by nothing, in fact, more than his own image. Using the text of Chuang-tsu's butterfly dream in this manner, and then by comparing it with the famous butterfly dream of the Wolf Man whom Freud analyzed, Lacan really asks us to experience the unconscious as a textual process, an exchange of metaphors and metonymies. (Concerning a semiotic account of metaphor and metonymy in the psychoanalytic process, see Bar, 1971. See Freud, 1963, for his account of the Wolf Man's phobic butterfly dream as a symbolic screen-memory, which may be his clearest analysis of the unconscious as a text. See also Elam, 1990.) The virtues of Lacan's "mid-speak" approach, of saying things by halves, are perhaps dubious, but then how successful was Freud at communicating his theory of dreams? Unlike Freud, Lacan resists the desire to "say it all," in some metalanguage (actually, Freud was aware of the problem and spoke of the dangers of metapsychology by personifying it as a "witch"). Rather, with his own evocative silences Lacan invites his reader to interpret the ambiguities and ironies - the difficulties - of his text, warning us at the outset however that what he has to say about dreams may remain enigmatic.

Although Lacan was committed to the powers of the spoken word, in his seminars examining the nature of textuality in Freud he was the first to introduce the notion of the text as a chain of signifiers. He seems to invite us, starting from the text itself, to find its "true" meaning where the sliding of the signifier would ultimately rest in a stable signified or "message." Of course this "true" meaning would exist nowhere but in the text and would be found in the gaps of the text, in its strange lapses, which interpretation would fill in. In his early writings Lacan instructs us to follow the letter of Freud's text and to ironize any critical preconception we may have toward Freud as a popular image. But irony in Lacan does not always make the incoherent in Freud meaningful (this is really a New Critical assumption about its function). More often than not, irony in Lacan such as we have seen above undoes meaning by producing uncertainty. Freud had said that a dream does not want to say anything to anyone; it is not a vehicle for communication, it is meant to remain ununderstood. The implication is that like dreams, literary texts such as Chuang-tsu's butterfly dream do not speak and their final aim is not communication. Like dreams also, they seek to conceal their meaning to a certain extent. But nonetheless, because they both (or at least the dream report) use writing

and a specific kind of representation Freud investigated, to an extent they must remain comprehensible. Literary texts are, in short, double texts, a notion we will explore with Jacques Derrida. Lacan's writings really mark the end of - or at least an epistemological break with - naive reading in French criticism, of the sort I. A. Richards analyzed so well in his Practical Criticism. They also mark the birth of an unflagging attention to what in a text (bits of nonsense, lacunae) resists intelligibility. For his part, Richards had excoriated "message" theories of reading which argue the value of a literary text on the presence or absence of "inspiring thoughts" to be gotten out of it. As a matter of fact he argued that the readers' quest for a message could blind them to the differences of the literary text (also, by implication, difference from itself; the literary text may not be self-identical): "Value in poetry turns nearly always upon differences and connections too minute and unobtrusive to be directly perceived" (p. 284). He was suspicious of most critical keywords, because they excelled in duplicity. Richards wanted to instill in readers a "virulent culture of doubt" so that all critical certainties (except one: the belief in meaning) would wither in their minds. Lacan on the other hand gives us elusive, yet resonant key terms - *midire, l' objet petit a, le regard* - but his ironies are directed against those who would use them to find an inspirational message in dreams such as Chuang-tsu's butterfly dream.

Unlike Lacan, Richards did not possess a self-consciously articulated theory of the text, though he did operate with a four-part theory of meaning which he thought necessary to grasp the complexities of meaning in the literary text. In his later writings, however, we may observe a shift in his thinking away from positivism and towards hermeneutics. In Coleridge on Imagination (1935), for example, we see him arguing that the meaning of a "difficult" poem may be indefinitely postponed. A poem such as T. S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday," Richards argues, "will come into being for very few readers without movements of exploration and resultant ponderings ... And yet these very movements - untrackable as they perhaps are, and uninducible as they almost certainly are by any other words - are the life of the poem. In these searchings for meanings of a certain sort [my emphasis] its being consists" (p. 216). Richards goes on to dispute a passage of Eliot's about the supposed difficulty of modern poetry because Eliot in his view is not precise enough about the sorts of meanings readers expect to find in poetry. It turns out that difficulty for Richards derives from differences between the actual structures of the meanings of the poetry and the structures which are supposed to be natural and necessary to it. Lacan's writings, on the other hand, grant great authority to the texts of Freud because of his ability to track the disruptive effects of the unconscious in language (puns, slips of the tongue, jokes). The scandal of Lacan to most readers, though, is that he ultimately grants little authority to meaning: our conscious lives are "textualized" by the "letter" of the unconscious, by bits of unconscious nonsense. Like a true structuralist, he shows meaning arising out of the play of non-meaning. Metaphor, a topic we will take up in the next section, is for Lacan "located precisely at the point where meaning is produced out of non-meaning" (1977a, p. 158). Richards may have been willing to defer meaning, but he would not have made metaphor part of a chain of repressed signifiers. Richards believed in the dream of communications, Lacan in the (always enigmatic) communication of the dream.

Jacques Derrida and Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy

One of the prominent sources of difficulty in reading discussed by Richards was figurative language. Many readers in the protocols simply could not distinguish metaphor from literal statement, and thus they fell into the trap of "over-literal" reading (p. 184). At the time

of his Practical Criticism, Richards wondered how he was to explain to those who saw nothing but a tissue of ridiculous exaggerations in poetical language, what way the sense of metaphor was to be read. He gave us his theory of metaphor in The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1936). In this book, Richards expounded what might seem an uncompromising line on the central importance of metaphor. "Thought is metaphoric," Richards declared, "and the metaphors of language derive therefrom" (p. 94). Furthermore, Richards argued that traditional studies of metaphor (which argued that figures are a mere embellishment or added beauty, and that the plain meaning, the tenor, is what alone really matters and is something that, regardless of the figures, might be gathered by the patient reader) were not very profitable. Richards had encountered too many misreadings to believe that this "classical" theory would be of much help.

A modern theory of metaphor would object, according to Richards, that in many of the most important uses of metaphor, the co-presence of the vehicle and the tenor results in a meaning (which Richards wants clearly distinguished from the tenor) which is not attainable without their interaction in a text. As Christopher Norris points out, in contesting the traditional view of metaphor, and reversing an entrenched priority (the view that literal meaning is what we want to arrive at in reading metaphor which is merely an incidental supplement of language), Richards goes some way towards the deconstructionist outlook of Jacques Derrida (Norris, 1982, p. 58-59). As a matter of fact, Derrida cites Richards with approval in his study of metaphor, "The White Mythology" (Derrida, 1982, p. 228). For Derrida, Richards's theory with its distinction between metaphorical tenor and metaphorical vehicle (in which sense the meaning must clearly be distinguished from the tenor) is useful because it problematizes and delays our quest for a literal ground. But Derrida parts company with Richards and his belief that a theory of metaphor or logical metalanguage could be devised that would allow us to step outside the figural domain.

Derrida's argument in "The White Mythology" is tightly woven, and I can only deal with it here in summary fashion. By a very close study of so-called "worn-out" or "dead" metaphors in philosophical texts from Aristotle to Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger, the paradox Derrida traces is this: there is no discourse on metaphor that is not stated within a metaphorically engendered conceptual network. There is no non-metaphorical standpoint from which to perceive the order and the demarcation of the metaphorical field. Metaphor is metaphorically stated. Furthermore, the theory of metaphor returns in a circular manner to the metaphor of theory, which determines in the whole history of Western philosophy the truth of being in terms of presence. The effort to decipher figures in philosophical texts is self-defeating: metaphor is not just a block to the communication of the concept that could be "deobstructed" by some theory of meaning in the mode of Richards; its effects are absolutely uncontrollable (for a good summary of Derrida's argument, to which this summary is indebted, see Ricoeur, 1977). To take one example that Derrida uses, in the very theory of metaphor we find the hierarchical opposition of meaning to its metaphorical signifier, without taking into account that the separation between sense (the signified) and the senses (sensory signifier) is enunciated by means of the same root (*sensus, Sinn*), permitting to be called sense that which should be foreign to the senses (Derrida, 1982, p. 228).

Metaphor doubles and endangers the philosophical text. It is determined by philosophy as a provisional loss of meaning, "an economy of the proper without irreparable damage, a certainly inevitable detour, but also a history with its sights set on, and within the horizons of, the circular reappropriation of literal, proper meaning" (p. 210). Derrida's deconstructive attempt in this essay is to explode the reassuring opposition of the metaphoric and the proper,

to write another self-destruction of metaphor which doubles the philosophical one to the point of being taken for it, because it resembles it. But Derrida is saying this doubleness is an aspect of all texts, not just philosophical ones. For Derrida, every text is a double text, there are always two texts in one: "Two texts, two hands, two visions, two ways of listening. Together simultaneously and separately" (p. 65). The reading of the text therefore requires a "double science" (*la double séance*), rendering apparent the duplicity of any text (see "The Double Session" in Derrida's Dissemination, 1981).

According to Vincent Descombes, convention has us picture metaphysics as splitting the world into two, into the sensible and the intelligible, the body and the soul, tenor and vehicle (most summary treatments of Richards's theory of metaphor tend to be a lot more binary and "metaphysical" than his own text suggests, and Derrida shows). And philosophical empiricism (in which we can probably include the I. A. Richards of Practical Criticism), in a protest no less classic, overthrew this Platonism, and maintained that the intelligible arises from the sensible, that thought is a faculty of the body, etc. But Derrida's double science, "by an unprecedented operation, splits the metaphysical text itself into two. It is the text's duplicity which enables the manifest text to 'exceed' or 'transgress' in the direction of the latent text (to use by approximation, an analogy from Freudian dream theory)" (Descombes, 1980, p. 151).

Thus it is by means of demonstrating the duplicity of texts themselves that the Derridean theory of the text is literally justified. More closely than Lacan, Derrida devotes himself to the letter of the text. And if writing - literal writing - has up to now been treated as a mere supplement (the argument in Of Grammatology) to speech, Derrida will turn the scapegoating of writing around and insist on a rigorous literalism of the text in which it appears that writing is the name metaphorically attached to whatever eludes, subverts or opposes the discourse of logocentric reason. (I might mention here what theorists of the text often point out, that "text" itself is a metaphor derived from the Latin "textus" meaning woven. For a lucid discussion of how "literal" reading operates in deconstruction, see Norris, 1987. My account here is a compressed version of that given by Norris.)

Unfortunately, space does not allow me to discuss Derrida's project in Of Grammatology (but cf. Hazard Adams, 1990, on the historical opposition between literal writing and allegorical or spiritual truth), nor his remarks on paraphrase (Derrida, 1982, p. 40-46), but I should mention what is important to remember about deconstruction with regard to the notion of difficulty. As Jonathan Culler indicates, deconstruction is not a theory that defines meaning in order to tell you how to find it. Rather, "As a critical undoing of the hierarchical oppositions on which theories depend, it demonstrates the difficulties [my emphasis] of any theory that would define meaning in an univocal way: as what an author intends, what conventions determine, what a reader experiences" (Culler, 1982, p. 131). I interpret this observation strongly, in the sense that deconstruction itself can be read as a theory of difficulty. Richards had argued that intellectual tradition tells us literally how to read: "It guides us in our metaphorical, allegorical, symbolical modes of interpretation" (Richards, 1935, p. 193). But Derrida replaces this hermeneutic authority of tradition with the notion of the general text (*le texte général*), which has no boundaries. So the "text of philosophy" in Derrida's reading is part of this general text in which it is difficult to locate where meaning resides (though we may wish to make determinations of meaning for pragmatic reasons, as Culler points out). The implications of Derrida's views on metaphor are not only that concepts are not separable in their adequacy or inadequacy from metaphors - a point made by Richards and echoed by Derrida - but also that the very notions of what in a text might be nonmetaphorical are concepts whose

force owes much to their figural attractions (one would have to consider here the effect on reading of rhetorical figures; cf. Elam, 1990, or the writings of Paul de Man).

Interestingly enough in view of the difficulties involved in reading philosophical texts, Derrida is closely involved in France with GREPH (*Groupe de Recherches sur L'Enseignement Philosophique*), a collective set up to examine the various ways in which philosophy has been taught in the French school and university system. Acting as a kind of philosophical interest group, GREPH has demanded an extension of the number of hours of philosophy taught in the French school system, but above all it wishes to defend the "*classe de philosophie*" - the teaching of philosophy in the final year of the *lycée*, against those who would argue that it is too "difficult" a subject to teach there. (For an account of the activities and publications of GREPH, see Fynsk, 1978.)

Roland Barthes and the Pleasure of the Text

Another area of difficulty in reading that Richards distinguished - and which Barthes was preoccupied with in his later writings - was not concept formation but the function of images in reading. Some readers in Richards's protocols were definitely operating with an imagistic theory of meaning, which Richards was at some pains to refute. Indeed, so concerned was he about it that he devoted a special appendix to arguing that it is also possible to think concretely without any imagery of any kind. Confusion and prejudice on this point were chiefly due, Richards said, to a too simple idea of what is necessary for mental representation. Richards (1963) points out that an image (in so far as it represents by being a copy) can only represent things that are like one another, but a word is "a point at which very different influences may cross and unite" (p. 344). For the very reason that a word is not like its meaning, it can represent an enormously wide range of different things.

It is this respect for the differences of meaning which gives Richards's writings something of a contemporary flavor. But still, Richards was preoccupied with a theory of meaning and not with a theory of the text. For his part, Barthes is very clear about the fact that theory of the text is constituted by a withdrawal from the image-systems of language: "The text is language without its image-reservoir, its image-system" (Barthes, 1975, p. 33). As pointed out in the passage from Barthes cited in the introduction of this paper, the pedagogical problem as Barthes saw it was to make adolescents understand that there is text everywhere, but that not everything is text. Writing (*écriture*, as opposed to *écrivance*, the unselfconscious writing of discourses) was the type of practice that would allow us to dissolve the image-repertoires of our language. "Image-repertoire" is a term coined by Barthes with which he designates the Lacanian imaginary - a set of images functioning as a misunderstanding of the subject by itself. As such, it is critical of narcissistic reading. In narcissistic reading (which Richards characterized so well), the reader is cut off from any relation to the world of production, and he projects only his own psychology: "The reader who cannot write projects his image-repertoire (the narcissistic zone of the psyche), very far from his muscular, carnal body, the body of jouissance. He is drawn into the trap of the image-repertoire" (Barthes, 1985, p. 241). However, Barthes also made it clear that one cannot write without the image-repertoire. Barthes realized that he had a vital relation to past literature precisely because that literature provided him with a good relation to images (or as he puts it is his own parlance, he "recognized himself" there as the subject of an image-repertoire). As for the text, it could only be a braid, woven in an extremely twisted and devious fashion between the symbolic field of

language and the image-repertoire. That is to say, in the process of writing as Barthes conceives of it, the image-repertoire would be undone in a kind of back-and-forth movement between the Lacanian registers of the imaginary and the symbolic.

Evidently, Barthes had no use for the Lacanian register of the Real, unless it could be the body. Perhaps the most interesting thing about Barthes as a critic was his insistence in his later writings on the pleasures of the text, which are always plural and bodily. He distinguishes between pleasure (*plaisir*), which is linked to a consistence of the self, of the subject, which is assured in values of comfort, relaxation, ease - for Barthes it was the entire realm of reading the classics - and bliss (*jouissance*,) the system of reading, or utterance, through which the subject, instead of establishing itself, is lost. The great majority of texts we know and love consist roughly of texts of pleasure, while texts of bliss are, according to Barthes, extremely rare, primarily because of the historical and institutional tendency of reading in culture to recuperate any loss of meaning. And there is no assurance given by Barthes that bliss could be made a part of any historical curriculum, or that it would be possible to root out entirely the process of adhering to an image in a movement of identification that accompanies much of the activity of "passive" reading in modern consumer society (cf. Lasch, 1979, for a recent investigation of the effects of mass culture). Yet he did not entirely despair.

Is it still possible to learn how to read in schools? Barthes gives us a qualified yes as an answer to this weighty question, providing the function of institutional codes is clearly identified, and the accomplishments of liberal secular schooling are maintained, but redirected toward the exercise of *l'esprit critique*, the decipherment of codes, supported by semiological studies. In the type of writing/reading Barthes inaugurated in his critical works such as the S/Z (1974), we get a glimpse of this transmuted practice. It would be one in which we would turn ourselves into psycho-analytical subjects by writing. We would conduct a transferential analysis on ourselves, recognize our "I" and its complicity with an image-repertoire. At this point, presumably, the relationship between subject and object would be playfully displaced, as it is in Lacan's intertextual "reading" of Chuang-tsu's butterfly dream. Only in this way, thought Barthes, could we reinvent the ideological necessity to represent ourselves, which inhabits all language.

We may conclude this investigation into the theory of the text with the observation that the old opposition between subjectivity as an attribute of impressionistic criticism (what Richards sought to defend students against with better techniques of reading) and objectivity as an attribute of scientific criticism (Richards's dream of communication, or the early Barthes) becomes in the last analysis unimportant. Barthes remarks that traditionally schools have taught something on the order of doubt or truth - an alternative which is difficult to escape. But with the theory of the text as writing, as an indefinite field in permanent metamorphosis, where language is ceaselessly at play weaving our culture's social codes, Barthes believed that we could institute a process of liberation in which meaning would not "pass through a return of the signified." Students would then experience meaning not so much as an effect of power, mastery, or appropriation, but as the result of a patient and passionate weaving and unweaving: "There would be a whole spectrum of projects, tasks that would be directed roughly toward a disappropriation of the text" (Barthes, 1985, p. 149). And finally, with regard to the role of teachers: "We must not teach skepticism but doubt bolstered by *jouissance*" (p. 242).

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